

## Stocking Your Saltwater Aquarium With Tropical Fish

When most people look at a saltwater aquarium the first thing they notice are the fish. Fish of all shapes, sizes, colors, styles, and personalities. One of the most devastating things that can happen to a tropical fish lover after they have gone to the effort and expense of purchasing an aquarium and setting it up is to purchase fish that are riddled with disease that die shortly after they are brought to their new home.

The odds of purchasing a healthy fish is by purchasing it from a reputable pet store. If you walk into a store that sells pet fish for private aquariums and your immediately flattened by the odor of rotting seafood turn around and walk away. It isn't unusual for fish stores to have a peculiar musty scent. Strong odor can indicate a store who is not as concerned as they should be about the care of their animals.

Take a good look at the store's aquariums. The tanks should be clean. The water should be clear. Don't be alarmed if you see a tank that has a sign announcing that the fish in the tank aren't for sale. Many fish stores don't have enough room for a quarantine tank.

The staff should be friendly and attentive. If the store is having a slow spell the employees should be cleaning tanks or feeding fish. When they catch a fish, the handler should use two nets and corner the fish, eliminating unnecessary stress. The members of the staff should be helpful and informative.

The rule of thumb is that if there are more than three dead fish in a tank consider shopping somewhere else. Dead fish happen. When stores are busy they don't always have the time to clean the deceased fish from the tank. So one or two is not necessarily a bad omen, but more than that and you'll want to consider looking somewhere else before you stock your saltwater aquarium.

When you are shopping for tropical fish take your time and really study the fish. Take note of their physical condition. Study their eyes, fins, mouths, scales, and abdomens. Put your hand as close to the glass as you can without actually touching it. The fish should either swim towards your hand, looking for food, or they should dart for cover. If a fish doesn't look or act healthy, don't purchase it.

Before you go shopping for tropical fish, gather a little knowledge. Make sure that the fish you purchase are compatible. Make sure you know what kind of food they require (predatory fish generally need frozen or live bait). If you decide that you want to own a predatory fish that requires live food make sure that you

have a way of keeping that food alive, in many cases this will mean a completely separate tank. If you are eventually planning adding coral to your saltwater aquarium you may want to start thinking ahead and purchase fish that are compatible with coral.